

National Drugs Mission Funds Progress report 2025-26

Executive Summary

This summary report highlights the progress made by projects funded under the Scottish Government's National Drugs Mission funds in 2025-26. This supports organisations which work with people affected by drug use across Scotland. It is based on progress reports shared by funded organisations and insights shared with our grants team through meetings and project visits.



SEPTEMBER 2026

1. Background

In January 2021, the Scottish Government announced a National Mission to reduce drug related harms and deaths¹. This Mission was supported by £250 million funding. Corra Foundation has distributed nearly £65 million of this funding through four National Drugs Mission Funds. These are the [Children and Families Fund](#), [the Improvement Fund](#), [the Local Support Fund \(LSF\)](#), and the [LSF Micro](#).

This report captures the scale and positive impact of the work delivered by funded projects.

2. Funded Projects

Over 200 National Drugs Mission funded projects were active in the reporting period. The work delivered by these projects is crucial to the Scottish Government's mission to prevent drug related deaths and to support people affected by drugs. The funded projects detailed in this report work directly, and often intensively, with people who use drugs and their families. Funding has supported front-line work ranging from providing crisis support to families and children affected by drugs, to outreach support to vulnerable individuals in prison and community settings.



£12,663,774
funding paid out in 2025/26



236
projects active during 2025/26



64,475
people supported in 2025/26

¹ [Public Health Scotland 2025](#). Analysis reveals families and communities impacted by drug-related deaths in Scotland

3. Project outcomes: the difference projects make.

Projects report progress towards one or more of the Scottish Government's [six outcomes](#)². Most projects are working with people across two or more of these, so the same person might be counted for more than one outcome. Below is an overview of each outcome.

Outcome 1:

41 projects used an early intervention approach in the delivery of their work, to ensure **fewer people develop problem drug use**. **14,242 people** were supported through these projects.

The DRC Youth deliver one to one support, diversionary group sessions and activities to young people aged 14-26 who are at risk of entering into drug use or who use drugs. The project helps young people to gain control of their lives and reduce drug related harm.

Outcome 2:

134 projects took a harm reduction approach to ensure **risk is reduced for people who take harmful drugs**. **30,343 people** got help to minimise the risks of their drug use.

Alcohol and Drugs Action deliver a Sharp Response and Crisis across Aberdeen City to people in their homes, providing harm reduction and wrap around support that reduces drug related harm and supports people into treatment and recovery.

Outcome 3:

134 projects supported **36,815 people at high risk to have access to treatment and recovery services**. These projects reach those furthest from support who are facing complex challenges.

NEDAC (North Edinburgh Drug and Alcohol Centre) support older people who use substances, who may find it difficult to attend services. Their staff work in a relational way to reduce harms and create supportive pathways into recovery.

Outcome 4:

104 projects helped **people receive high quality treatment and recovery services**, ranging from recovery cafes to residential rehabilitation services. **24,001 people** were able to begin and remain in treatment.

The Maxie Richards Foundation in Argyll and Bute deliver a residential rehabilitation service. In partnership with We are With You their programme includes overdose awareness, relapse prevention, and cognitive behavioural approaches, supporting residents to sustain recovery after residential rehab. .

Outcome 5:

175 projects supported **40,361 people to improve quality of life by addressing multiple disadvantages**. These projects tackle substance use issues by addressing wider needs.

Stirling District Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has embedded a specialist CAB Advice Service in addiction services across Forth Valley. The people they support have more financial stability, better mental health and improved recovery chances.

² [National Drugs Mission Plan 2022-2026](#).

Outcome 6:

Children, families and communities affected by substance use are supported by the work of **115 funded projects**. These projects supported **18,650 people** to progress their own recovery and support a loved one on their journey.

Phoenix Futures across Scotland have delivered 59 family group sessions, with over 700 family attendances across multiple locations. These sessions focused on family relationships, emotional regulation, and recovery support, helping families feel more confident in supporting their loved ones and strengthening engagement with wider services.



4. Cross-Cutting Priorities

Scottish Government identified [six cross-cutting priorities](#)³ that focus on building on strengths and reducing barriers. Here we describe how funded projects are delivering towards these priorities.

171 projects have lived experience at the heart (Priority 1)

Funded projects engaged people with lived experience as employees, trustees, and volunteers. Projects consistently report stronger engagement when services are delivered by staff and volunteers with lived experience of drugs or alcohol. Their authenticity is highly valued, helping to create psychologically safe environments and opportunities to speak with someone with shared experiences.

Lived Experience at **The Nest Wellbeing Group** isn't an add on, it is at the heart of everything they do. Their programmes are co-designed and co-led by people who've walked their own recovery journey. Their insight shapes the groups, guides partnerships, and ensures every voice matters.

108 projects deliver work with a focus on equalities and human rights (Priority 2)

Projects highlighted in this section focus on upholding people's human rights and supporting duty bearers to uphold people's rights. This includes protecting specific rights for people in recovery, such as access to their treatment of choice. Over the past year, funded projects have also increasingly referred to implementing the Charter of Rights for People Affected by Substance Use in their services.

The Simon Community train, support and develop the skills of their harm reduction champions, to help them improve networks and partnerships. This ensures that staff can take a rights-based approach that supports the delivery of the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) standards⁴. In the last year, 90% of staff reported they had increased confidence in challenging poor care and advocating alongside the people they support.

151 projects reported doing work that tackles stigma around drug use (Priority 3)

Funded projects continue to report that stigma is a major issue and can have a direct impact on people accessing support. Projects take a person-centred and holistic approach to tackle stigma. They not only show that recovery is possible, but that people in recovery enrich our society.

Positive Steps Partnership in Dundee provide a Cuckooing Service and work in partnership with Police Scotland. Their educational work in schools, chemists, in community hubs and in statutory organisation helps to tackle stigma. They focus on raising awareness to challenge harmful misconceptions.

³ [National Drugs Mission Plan 2022-2026](#)

⁴ [Medication Assisted Treatment \(MAT\) standards: access, choice, support - gov.scot](#)

72 projects reported delivering data-informed work (Priority 4)

These projects deliver services based on in-depth knowledge of people who use their services, best practice in service delivery and an understanding of how changes in drug consumption patterns will impact need.

Quarriers continue to deliver their project 'Our Promising Futures' supporting children and families affected by parental substance use within Moray. They use referral data and attendance feedback to shape their service delivery. For example, slow uptake of their Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART) sessions led them to create a targeted drop-in for families affected by ketamine use.

134 projects invested in building a resilient and skilled workforce (Priority 5)

Funded projects continue to support their teams through continuous professional development, structured supervision, and access to specialist training, particularly in trauma-informed practice, mental health, and safeguarding. Organisations demonstrate a commitment to reflective practice and psychological safety, recognising that staff wellbeing is fundamental to delivering safe and effective support.

We Are With You – Levenmouth Outreach and Harm Reduction Service have made significant investment in workforce development, ensuring that staff are confident, competent and well supported to deliver high quality outreach and harm reduction support. Staff have individual learning plans, protected learning time and access to reflective practice enabling them to provide a safe, effective and compassionate support across Levenmouth.

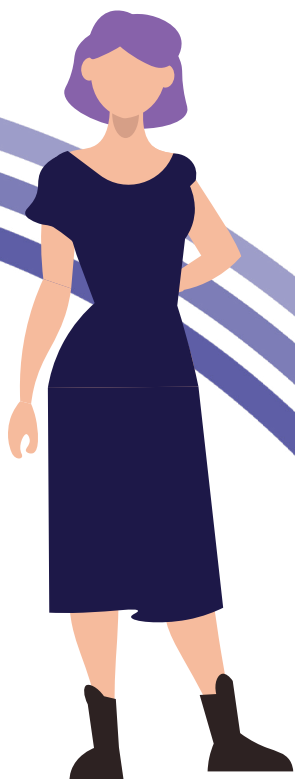
122 projects were psychologically informed (Priority 6)

Funded projects are reporting that more staff are being trained in trauma informed and psychologically informed models, enabling them to build empathic, respectful and therapeutic relationships. These practices are contributing to more compassionate and person-centred support for individuals with diverse and complex needs.

TCUK Scotland Limited embedded a psychologically informed practice approach across their service delivery, recognising the impact of trauma on behaviours, relationships and engagement with support. This approach and model has been strengthened within the service by the involvement of a professional counsellor, allowing the wider staff team to be more psychologically aware and confident.

5. Challenges

Projects identified several challenges negatively impacting project delivery. Three of these are detailed below. This section in the fuller report not only defines the range and impact of challenges that funded projects have faced but also highlights some excellent examples of good practice in mitigating challenges.



Poverty

93 funded projects reported challenges related to poverty.

Poverty continues to be one of the most significant and widespread barriers to recovery for individuals across Scotland. The number of funded projects reporting this challenge has risen to 93 this year (46% of funded projects that reported). Those who experience challenges in relation to drug use will often experience other underlying difficulties in relation to poverty and this can profoundly impact their health and wellbeing.

Funded projects report that poverty does more than limit access to support services; it also influences the wider conditions in which people live, affecting their overall health, wellbeing, and ability to maintain recovery. Poverty continues to act as a key driver, increasing vulnerability and, in many cases, contributing to the onset of addiction.

Workforce challenges

107 funded projects reported workforce challenges. Challenges related to recruitment, staff capacity, burnout and workforce resilience.

36% of projects reported prolonged vacancies and difficulties recruiting suitable candidates – notably a limited pool of suitable applicants, particularly for specialist or trauma-informed roles. This in turn has led to staff burnout and absence, compounded by increased demand in the service.

Gendered Barriers

33 funded projects reported challenges because of gendered barriers to service provision.

Many funded projects emphasised the impact of gender-based violence as a significant factor in the complex trauma many women carry. Women accessing services are often also subject to domestic abuse or coercive control, sexual violence or exploitation. Services report that women often felt judged and stigmatized, or fearful that their children would be taken from them, if services became involved in their lives. Lack of female staff and lack of gender specific safe spaces were also reported as challenging.

6. Conclusion

The 236 National Drugs Mission projects active in 2025/26 delivered life-changing support to people, families and communities affected by substance use across Scotland. This report shows the scale and impact of that support, and the value of the investment.

Many funded projects entered their fifth year of delivery in this reporting period. Sustained funding has helped them grow, reach more people and continue achieving their outcomes. Trusted workers providing consistent support have been vital in helping people stay on their recovery journey.

Together, the projects supported 64,475 people, 13,096 more than the previous year. This growth would not have been possible without secure, long-term National Drugs Mission funding.

Funded projects remained highly diverse this year, including outreach, counselling, recovery groups, community hubs, mobile harm reduction and residential rehabilitation. They employed hundreds of workers, many with lived experience, whose visibility offers hope to people beginning recovery.

All funded projects contributed to Scottish Government commitments, including the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards, Whole Family Approaches and the Charter of Rights for People Affected by Substance Use.

Corra is proud to support these diverse and important funded projects.



7. Parker's Story

Addiction Counselling Inverness (ACI) operating across Highland, is funded through the Local Support fund to provide talking therapy and group work programmes to people who use drugs, who are in recovery and to families who are affected by drug use.

Parker* was in his late twenties and referred to ACI at a point where his life was beginning to unravel. What started as occasional cocaine use during weekends had escalated into near daily use, mixed with misuse of prescription sedatives he sourced online. His family were at breaking point. They had tried everything from confrontation to quiet monitoring, but nothing worked. Parker had not engaged with NHS support after a negative experience during his early twenties that left him feeling dismissed and stereotyped. By the time he arrived at ACI he was defensive, sleep deprived, and convinced counselling would be pointless.

He was matched with a counsellor trained specifically in substance use, trauma and emotional regulation. The first goal was stabilisation. His sessions focused on reducing the immediate harms, identifying the patterns that triggered his drug use, and helping him understand the emotional and physical cycle he was trapped in. His counsellor kept the work steady and relational, meeting him exactly where he was rather than demanding rapid change.

By week six, the shifts were clear. His cocaine use had reduced significantly, his sleep had improved for the first time in months, and he had enough emotional bandwidth to talk about the deeper issues beneath his substance use. He disclosed childhood neglect he had never spoken about before and began to understand how stimulants had functioned as a coping mechanism for anxiety, low self-esteem and panic. Naming these things out loud helped him feel less broken and more human.

At the halfway point of his counselling block he was introduced to Recovery Coaching for additional weekly support. This was essential. Recovery Coaching provided structure, accountability and practical check ins between counselling sessions, helping him maintain the progress he was making. The counsellor and recovery coach worked collaboratively, they kept Parker steady during withdrawal dips, workplace pressure and the emotional backlash that came when he stopped numbing everything with drugs.

*Name has been changed

He relapsed twice. Instead of being shamed or dropped, the response was grounded, boundaried and supportive. He came back the next week. He later said that moment was when he realised the service actually cared whether he made it through, rather than judging him for slipping.

At 18 weeks he had reached a place he previously thought impossible. He was abstinent from cocaine. He was using his medication safely and under medical guidance. He had restarted the gym and repaired some relationships he believed were beyond saving. Most importantly, he was no longer frightened of his own emotions. He had strategies, insight and people who understood the complexity of recovery.

He continued engaging through peer support meetings and occasionally checked in with the Recovery Coach during stressful periods. In feedback he described ACI as-

“The first place that didn’t treat me like a disaster waiting to happen... It stopped me disappearing completely.”



About Corra Foundation

Corra Foundation exists to make a difference to the lives of people and communities. It works with others to encourage positive change, opportunity, fairness and growth of aspirations which improve quality of life. Corra wants to see a society in which people create positive change and enjoy fulfilling lives.

In 2020 Corra launched a ten-year strategy. It is long term because making a difference on the big challenges will take time. At its heart is the strong belief that when people find their voice, they unlock the power to make change happen.

Cover Photo: Giorgio Trovato via Unsplash
St Mungo Mural Artist: SMUG - Beyond Walls



www.corra.scot

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Our ways of working

At Corra we have a set of principles that we strive to put into practice across our roles as an employer, independent funder, charity and partner, as well as in our influencing activity. We will:

- Listen and respond to people, communities and organisations and amplify voices that are less well heard – their wisdom is at the heart of Corra's approach.
- Build relationships, always working alongside others on the basis of shared power, mutual trust and shared learning.
- Pursue diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), trying to challenge structural discrimination and contribute to radical shifts in the funding sector.
- Be an open, trusting and flexible grant maker.
- Ensure we contribute to tackling climate change, through our investments, operations and grant making and encouraging others to take action alongside us.
- Be bold, taking considered risks and supporting others to do the same.

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